

REMARKS

The Official Action of October 7, 2003, has been carefully reviewed. The claims in the application are now claims 1-8, the non-elected claims 9-15 having now been deleted without prejudice. Claims 1-8 should be in condition for formal allowance consistent with what is stated in the official action; accordingly, the applicants hereby respectfully request favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

Acknowledgement by the PTO of the receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119 is noted.

The examiner is thanked for pointing out a minor informality in claim 1, line 12, which has now been corrected. This is very clearly **not** a narrowing amendment. No limitation has been added in this regard and none is intended.

As previously indicated, applicants accept that claims 9-15 are patentably distinct from the elected claims, i.e. each set of claims defines nonobvious subject matter from the other set. Non-elected claims 9-15 have now been deleted above without prejudice to the invention of claims 1-8, and further without prejudice to applicants' rights (including

those rights provided by §§121, 120 and 119) to proceed with a divisional application without any penalty whatsoever.

Claims 1, 2, 7 and 8 have been rejected under §102 as anticipated by Horie et al '642 (Horie). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the reasons for the allowance of claims 3-6, claim 1 has now been amended above to add a step at the end similar or identical to the step indicated in paragraph 5 as making claims 3-6 allowable. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 7 and 8 should now be in condition for formal allowance along with claims 3-6.

Claims 3-6 have been allowed. Applicants accordingly understand that these claims are deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under §§102 and 103. As claim 1 has been similarly amended, applicants also understand that claims 1, 2 7 and 8 also define novel and unobvious subject matter under §§102 and 103.

The prior art documents made of record and not relied upon have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently pertinent to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

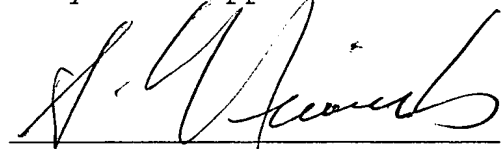
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Applicants believe that all issues have been resolved, whereby the present application should be in condition for formal allowance. Accordingly applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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